

Message Text

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66

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 DPW-01 AID-20 DRC-01 /118 W

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R 191150Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6881

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MA

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

CINCPAC

13TH AIR FORCE CLARK AB

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15107

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: STUDENTS ATTACK CONSTITUTION

REF: A. FBIS D190321Z SEPT 74; B. BANGKOK 2673; C. BANGKOK

4547

1. THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION WHICH HAS JUST PASSED ITS SECOND
READING IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) WAS ATTACKED
VIGOROUSLY DURING A HYDE PARK TYPE STUDENT RALLY ON SEPTEMBER
18 AT THE PHRAMAINE GROUND. ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS
(REF A), SOME FIFTEEN STUDENT AND ACTIVIST GROUPS COOPERATED
IN ORGANIZING THE RALLY WHICH DREW BETWEEN FIVE AND TEN THOUSAND
PEOPLE, THE LARGEST SUCH STUDENT RALLY SINCE LATE JANUARY 1974.
THE SPEAKERS MADE FOUR DEMANDS: (A) THE VOTING AGE BE LOWERED
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FROM 20 TO 18; (B) MINIMUM AGE FOR PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES

BE SET AT 23; (C) THE ASSEMBLY SHOULD CONSIST OF A SINGLE HOUSE OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES; AND (D) THE GOVERNMENT MUST SEEK PERMISSION FROM THE ASSEMBLY FOR ALLOWING FOREIGN FORCES TO BE STATIONED IN THAILAND OR SENDING THAI SOLDIERS ABROAD.

2. KHUKRIT PRAMOT, SPEAKER OF THE NLA, AND GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, COMMANDER OF THE THAI ARMY, WERE BOTH SUBJECT TO BITTER ATTACK. THIRAYUT BUNMI, A LEADER OF THE OCTOBER 1973 UPRISING, WAS ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT SPEAKERS. ACCORDING TO THE "BANGKOK POST" OF SEPTEMBER 19, HE SAID THAT IF THEY CHOSE TO DO SO THE STUDENTS STILL HAD THE POWER TO FORCE KHUKRIT PRAMOT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AS THEY DID THE FORMER MILITARY TRIO. HE ALSO ATTACKED GEN. KRIT SIWARA, POLICE CHIEF GEN. PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN AND ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF LT. GEN. VITHUM YASAWAT FOR SPREADING FALSE STORIES ABOUT HIM AND FOR TRYING TO DESTROY STUDENT POWER. SEKSAN PRASOETKUN, ANOTHER LEADER OF THE OCTOBER 1973 DEMONSTRATIONS, CLAIMED TO REPRESENT FIFTEEN ACTIVIST GROUPS AND STATED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO FIGHT WITH HIS LIFE IF THE NLA FAILED TO FULFILL THE PROTESTORS' DEMANDS.

3. STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS ON SEPTEMBER 19 CARRIED THEIR LIST OF DEMANDS TO THE NLA. LAST-DITCH EFFORTS BY SOME ASSEMBLYMEN TO REOPEN DISCUSSION OF THE MINIMUM VOTING AND CANDIDACY AGES AND AN ELECTED VERSUS AN APPOINTED SENATE WERE, HOWEVER, VOTED DOWN. MANY ASSEMBLYMEN, INCLUDING SPEAKER KHUKRIT PRAMOT, BELIEVE IT IS TOO LATE TO REOPEN DISCUSSION ON THESE ISSUES AT THIS TIME. THEY BELIEVE THE NEXT ELECTED PARLIAMENT COULD AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AND CHANGE VOTING AGES. THE ISSUES WILL NOT BE FINESSED EASILY AND WE EXPECT DEMONSTRATIONS TO CONTINUE. THE STUDENTS, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO HAVE MISSED THEIR CHANCE BY NOT CAMPAIGNING FOR THEIR DEMANDS BEGINNING SEVERAL WEEKS AGO.

4. COMMENT: WE EXPECT THE TEMPO OF STUDENT ACTIVITY TO PICK UP FROM NOW TO AND BEYOND OCTOBER 14, THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER 1973 UPRISING. STUDENT GROUPS PREVIOUSLY CRITICIZED THE CONSTITUTION DRAFTING COMMITTEE'S TEXT (REFS B & C) AND THE PRESENT CRITICISMS MAY SERVE AS A PRINCIPAL RALLYING CRY BRINGING STUDENTS BACK TOGETHER AGAIN, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. THE VOTING AGE COULD CONTINUE TO BE A CAUSE FOR RESENTMENT. WHILE THE STUDENTS THUS FAR ARE NOT PLANNING VIOLENCE, THEY WILL INCREASE PRESSURE, CONFIDENTIAL

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THROUGH DEMONSTRATIONS, ON THE ASSEMBLY AND GOVERNMENT FOR MORE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF THEIR VIEWPOINT. THE RTG, HOWEVER, IS PREPARING FOR AN EVENTUALITY.
KINTNER

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